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FIGHTING TALK

Issue 5 Price £1

ONE LAW FOR THEM

The magazine of Anti-Fascist Action

FRONT COVER PHOTO

Neil Parrish (front right) arrested for the Buntingford attack (see centre pages) pictured here with other keen bird-watchers.

AFA STATEMENT

The June issue of Searchlight Magazine (Searchlight 216) carried on the back of it, an article headed "Security Alert". Four names appear in this article that is supposedly uncovering infiltrators within the movement. Alongside others the name of Malcolm Astells appears. Anti Fascist Action repudiates the accusations made against this person, they are without substance, and they are to be ignored.

We welcomed the gesture by people associated with Searchlight, who at the recent Unity Carnival in Newcastle, refused to sell issue 216, in the spirit of Anti-Fascist Solidarity. There is definitely a role for an anti-fascist intelligence magazine, but harassing genuine militants, certainly isn't it.

Join AFA

In the fight against fascism in Britain, Anti-Fascist Action has a record that is second to none. Our unique combination of physical confrontation and ideological struggle has produced results time and again.

We say no platform for the fascists - no meetings, no marches, no paper sales, no leafleting - and we mean it, as the fascists know only too well. Our aim is to cause the maximum disruption to fascist activities.

But that doesn't mean that AFA only needs street-fighters. Far from it. Everyone has a role to play in AFA, whether they feel confident in physical confrontations or not.

None of our successes in physically confronting the fascists would have been possible without the contribution of non-combatants. From legal observers to scouts, from leafleters to people who can write articles or speak at meetings, AFA needs people with a whole range of skills if it is to continue to succeed.

There's a lot to do, so don't wait around. Join today.

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Hemel Nitrate

Following the rout of the National Front election meeting in Hemel Hempstead in April 1991, several anti-fascists were arrested. Their names were published in the local press. Shortly after, a vicious and indiscriminate telephone campaign of intimidation was started against the families of two of the men concerned. The campaign persisted for many months.

In one case, one of the arrested men was followed as he took his 9 year old daughter to a dancing class. The little girl was later told over the phone that she would never go dancing again, and that they were "going to shoot your daddy's legs off."

Many of those active in the recent campaign against the NF candidate in the local elections know these families. They, and other anti-fascists, are determined that the campaign of terror launched by the Hemel Hempstead NF will backfire.

On Saturday 24th April, a tawdry collection of 45 individuals participated in a march by the neo-nazi National Front from Hemel Hempstead station to the local Mountbatten School. The march was organised in an effort to support the three NF candidates in the County Council elections of 6th May.

An Anti-Nazi League presence of around 100 demonstrated at the station. Knowing that anti-fascists at the station would be boxed off by the heavy police presence, Anti-Fascist Action organised independently.

As the fascist march crossed the "magic roundabout" in Hemel, anti-fascists attempted a forcible infiltration. Regrettably, the riot police and dog handlers just managed to head off the manoeuvre.

Re-grouping, the 80-strong AFA contingent headed towards the election meeting. In a re-run of an incident at the NF's election meeting in Hemel two years ago, the ANL greeted the AFA group with cries of "Nazi Scum" as the police parted to let them into the meeting.

Front leader Ian Anderson looked on in horror as anti-fascists filed in one by one into the hall. Ten, twenty, thirty ... uh oh! In his agitation Anderson began caressing himself with his free hand through his trouser pocket. Perhaps it was just a nervous tick. Asked by an AFA member to explain himself, Anderson whipped his hand out like a scorpion had stung it.After the shortest speech of his life, Anderson attempted to rouse his edgy troops in a chorus of the National Anthem. It was cut short by a volley of chairs from the back of the hall as scuffles broke out. The meeting was routed. The presence of the riot police alone prevented any encounter of a more serious nature.

Pushed out by the police, the anti-fascists covered both exits from the school. Almost two hours passed. Was this to be another Waco, with a mass suicide from the Fronters? As Chief Inspector Dumpleton said in the local paper: "As soon as there was the incident inside the school I closed the meeting down. We then had to decide how to get the National Front away from the building without coming into contact with the demonstrators. Although it was not part of our original plan to take them out of the hall in police vans, it was agreed that it would be the best way to resolve the situation." And so the fascists, huddled inside, were driven away to safety.

Two anti-fascists were arrested in the meeting. Donations towards their legal costs should be sent to Herts AFA.

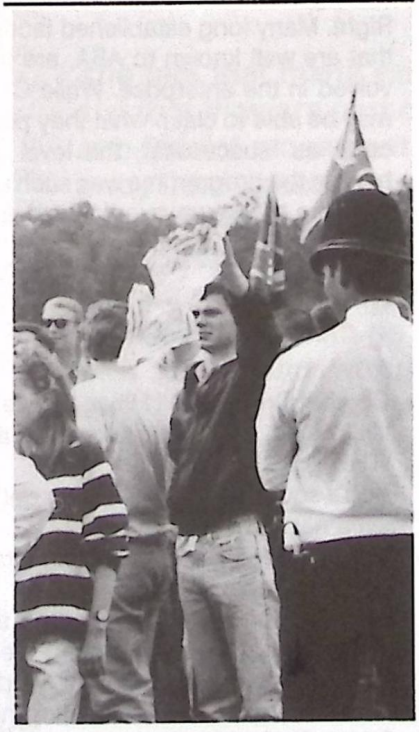
Getting Shirty?

An interesting item appeared in the Watford Observer after the NF march in Hemel on 24th April. We quote: "A 26-year old man from South Oxhey was viciously attacked while on a shopping trip for being in the wrong place with the wrong shirt."

Police claim the man was attacked by anti-racist protesters who were in the town centre to demonstrate against a National Front rally there. They think the man was assaulted because he was wearing a Springboks rugby shirt, and may have appeared to support the South African regime of apartheid.A police spokesman said: "From the information to hand this gentleman was going about his own business and had no connection with any of the marches in the town centre that day."

The victim said: "The police say the assault was because of my shirt and that the people who did this thought I was some sort of racist, but I make a point of not getting involved in politics and certainly not extreme politics like that."

Although the 'victim' was not named in this report, in several other local papers he was identified as Glyn Jones from South Oxhey. While it would be wrong for us to speculate on the motives behind the attack, it has been suggested to us that this could possibly be the same Glyn Jones who is in South Oxhey BNP and that he might not have been in Hemel "on a shopping trip." Who knows?



The snivelling Michael Stoneman a fascist who was also arrested at Hemel, pictured here on a BNP counter demo in Bermondsey August '91. Is that a poster he's got or just something to cry into?

The last defendant, 18 stone skinhead Kirk Barker from Basingstoke, pleaded not guilty on charges of violent disorder and reckless driving. Barker has the swastika-like symbol of the South African white supremacist organisation, the AWB, tattooed on his forehead. He failed to turn up to the hearing on 17 July 1992. He was finally arrested at Waterloo Bridge railway station, during the "Battle of Waterloo" while attempting to make his way to the "Screwdriver" concert. He was convicted at Horseferry Road Magistrates Court (14th September 1992) of the possession of a firearm, namely a can of CS gas. He received the remarkably lenient sentence of one day in jail.

Neil Parrish, deep under cover, on his way to St. Albans Crown Court

Evidence was heard from the Bengali victims of the assault, as well as from two residents of the road in which the attack took place. Statements were originally taken from seven residents, who were notified that they would be required to give evidence in court. In fact, the remaining five witnesses were not called, without being given any reason why their evidence was not to be heard. The real reason may have been that they were able to provide identification evidence that the police did not want to use, since this would have involved multiple charges against a number of those in the van.

The court was told that when the van was stopped shortly after the attack, police officers found a number of items inside. These included; what the police termed "vast amounts" of racist and homophobic BNP literature; "Blood and Honour" magazines with a large swastika on the cover; "White Skin" and "British Oi" magazines; racist tapes and albums; a poster of Hitler; a 6" x 4" swastika flag; and an assortment of weapons were made exhibits in the trial: two rubber coshes, a truncheon, a baseball bat, and a pickaxe handle.

Weapons

In another remarkable decision, the judge ruled that the other items found in this assortment of weaponry were "inadmissible evidence", and therefore could not be made known to the jury. The list of weapons found in the van, but concealed from the jury was as follows: an axe; a machete, two heavy metal chisels, two items which the judge described as "fearsome looking knives with long blades", a stiletto knife, a silver knuckleduster, a "black widow" catapult with ball bearing ammunition, and a canister of CS gas (see above). The judge referred to these items as "a veritable arsenal". In the judge's own words, he might be "erring on the side of over-fairness to the defendant", but he would not allow the jury to know that these weapons, including the CS gas, had been in the van.

Barker also admitted that he was the sole driver of the van, a white transit, which also belonged to him. He was found not to have a driving licence, or insurance. He was not charged with these offenses. The charge of "reckless driving" was only added at the insistence of the magistrate at the committal stage. The police, apparently, did not think that deliberately driving a van at speed towards a group of people, in a manner causing them literally to leap for their lives, was sufficient grounds for such a charge, or indeed, a charge of attempted murder.

The statements also contain Barker's admission that he is a member of the BNP. Questioned about the swastika flag, Barker stated: that "there is no way the BNP use the swastika publicly" although it remained a "white man's symbol used by us". This, he stated, was due to the fact that, "too many lies had been told about the people who used it before us". His counsel, Mr Ross, acting for Southampton Solicitors Peach and Gray (curious, in that none of the van's occupants were from Southampton), argued at some length that "Blood and Honour" was not a racist publication, and that possession of a nazi flag did not necessarily indicate that the owner held racist views.

Despite all these manoeuvres, the evidence against Barker (including

his own admissions) was so overwhelming that there was little doubt of the eventual verdicts: guilty on both counts. He and the three defendants who pleaded guilty were sentenced on July 2. Incidentally, no-one turned up to support Barker during the entire five day hearing. He got nicked, and the BNP dumped him.

The case obviously exhibits a number of curious features: even though the defence counsel himself admitted that "lots of people" (ie: at least 10) were involved in the attack, of the eleven originally arrested, only eight were charged. Of these eight, four in effect had their charges dismissed by the judge, ie: were "bound over". The evidence was so strong that the "leniency" of the prosecution in offering the bind overs became even more baffling. Then again, of all the charges that would appear to be appropriate, conspiracy, assault, GBH, possession of offensive weapons, attempted murder etc., only the blanket charge of violent disorder was invoked. Moreover, despite the van occupant's original pleas of "not guilty" all round, these were changed by three of the four defendants to "guilty" in July 1992. Why the sudden change of heart? Was there a deal, so that at the eventual trial the impression would be given of a single fanatic acting alone, rather than of an organised racial attack by members of a neo-nazi organisation?

It is another uncomfortable fact that the legal process was allowed to drag on for almost two years before the final appearance at court. Witnesses were told repeatedly that the case was to be heard on a certain date, only to have it postponed - without explanation. The passage of time could of course, only weaken the prosecution case. memories would fail; key witnesses might become unavailable. Several independent witnesses who had made statements and had been told that they would be called, were later told that their evidence would not be called after all, again without explanation. At the heart of these murky circumstances, was the inexplicable decision of the judge to rule that the weapons cache was to be kept secret from the jury. Despite constituting a serious criminal offence in itself, and despite constituting the clearest evidence of intent and identity (why carry CS gas, a catapult or a knuckleduster around in your van, unless you intend to attack, or have attacked someone?) no mention of the van's armoury could be made. In essence, the weapons were the damning evidence of premeditated, organised criminal intent, and it was deliberately hushed up, for the very reason that it was too incriminating!

The Verdict

On Friday 2nd July the 4 defendants were brought back for sentencing. Once again, AFA mounted a picket of the court. Although Barker was left to his own devices throughout the week long trial, a mob of BNP minders were expected to attend the sentencing. Surely Neil Parrish would show up to support his own brother? He didn't. A small team of 3 BNP boneheads sat in on the morning session, greeted enthusiastically by their friends in the dock, but refused to leave the building when the hearing was adjourned for lunch. They eventually left through the back door, escorted by the police, without waiting for the court to resume. The consternation on the faces of Barker, Parrish and Co. when they failed to reappear during the second half was a treat.

In mitigation, Barker's brief frankly found nothing to say. Speaking for Marsh, his lawyer announced that he wanted to apologise, not only to the victims of the attack, but to the whole asian community. The best was yet to come.

For Paul Lincoln, who looked the village idiot of the group, his brief explained to the court that he had joined the BNP solely because of his interests in Renaissance History. He was also a keen member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and therefore should not go to jail! Presumably Lincoln's brief knew a lost cause when he saw one, and decided to play it for laughs which he certainly got.

All had previous: Paul Parrish for attacking an Indian Restaurant and together with Marsh, giving someone a hiding at a bus stop (another race attack?). He had several other convictions for violent offenses including affray. Parrish, Lincoln and Marsh all received the remarkably (but not surprisingly) lenient sentence of 21 months : with 6 months added for Parrish who was serving a 6 month suspended anyway. Marsh, who had looked close to tears before hearing the sentence, gave his girlfriend a 2 fisted thumbs up as he left the dock. Barker got 3 years. With time already served and remission, all will be out within a year.

"he had joined the BNP solely because of his interests in Renaissance History. He was also a keen member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and therefore should not go to jail!"

The police frequently complain that racist events cannot be prosecuted, because there is no evidence that they are linked to the commission of violent offenses. Well, here is a case of a racist gig immediately followed by a savage racist attack by those who attended it, organised it, and even played at it! The circumstances of the attack indicate that it was clumsily executed. It's carelessness wasn't typical of BNP ventures of this type: plainly, the participants were hyped up by the gig. Further, the gig brought the participants together in circumstances where an attack was likely to ensue, should the opportunity arise. To that extent, the gig caused the attack. Yet there has never been a whisper than "Blood and Honour" events should be banned.

Key Lessons

Through the judicial murk, the lessons of the case remain clear. The BNP (and other neo-nazi organisations like the National Front) claim in their public announcements, to operate within the law. They claim not to encourage race attacks. Of course, anyone familiar with BNP activities knows very well that the opportunity for inciting and commit-

ting race attacks (or attacks on "reds" or homosexuals) is the only point of joining. But for anyone in doubt, the Buntingford attack provides the strongest possible refutation of these claims to be "normal" political parties.

A group of self-confessed BNP members attend a gig organised by a neo-nazi music organisation, whose supporters are themselves drawn almost exclusively from the BNP. They leave a racially inflammatory concert in a vehicle containing BNP literature alongside openly nazi publications and paraphernalia such as a 6" x 4" swastika flag, together with a collection of weapons that a judge describes as a "veritable arsenal"! These are used to attack a group of people with no provocation over than the fact that they are Bengali. The equation of BNP = Nazis = Race attacks could hardly be illustrated with greater force.

AFA believes that the case has highlighted a further important feature of the fight against fascism and the racial attacks that it breeds. Some anti-fascist elements, such as the ANL or ARA, believe that the police and the judiciary should be called upon to take stronger action against the race hate organisations. The Buntingford case shows the futility of such a strategy. If incidents such as the Buntingford attack were to receive the publicity and attention appropriate to the seriousness of the offenses committed and the problem they represent, the police and judicial system would be obliged to devote far greater resources to race attacks than they currently do. This is the last thing that they want.

Setting the Agenda

The police and judiciary do not consider racial incidents to be their responsibility. It is highly questionable whether either system, despite occasional public protestations, actually regards racism as a crime. For them, it is a "natural" or "inevitable" product of a multi-racial society and out of their proper jurisdiction. Their personnel frequently share the same perceptions of ethnic minorities as the race attackers themselves. On top of this, right wing politicians regard the fascists as an essential lubricant for their own racist policies. The fascists create a racist agenda on which the "decent" parties of "order" then capitalise.

There is a consistent pattern. As in Germany, racist atrocities are followed by a decent outpouring of public outrage and then by legislation directed against the members of the minorities being attacked! As in Germany, those caught red-handed in race attacks will be treated with the upmost leniency by the legal system. The clear implication is that the very presence of racial minorities "provokes" the attackers, and that racial offenses therefore, by definition, are always attended by mitigating circumstances. A genuine effort to eliminate organised racism is against the state's own interests and the state will consequently not make those efforts. The only circumstances in which the state would act against fascist organisations, would be as part of an offensive against certain groups on the left, for which prosecution of the fascists would act as cover. By calling for tougher police action, the left is making a rod for it's own back. Only the independent, direct and committed action of working class militants will effectively destroy the racists and the organisations behind them.

Drummond Street 4. - Attacked, Arrested, Acquitted.

Last summer, a group of Bengali lads were arrested in the Drummond Street area of Camden in London, and charged with Violent Disorder and Grievous Bodily Harm. It was the culmination of a series of racial incidents, initiated by a group of racist goons operating from a car.

The Bengalis had come out on to the street, after the police had failed (for a full 45 minutes) to appear after calls had been made. The racists, armed with iron bars and knuckle dusters, were speedily turned over by a mob of similarly equipped concerned local citizens.

Despite the fact that the mob in the car had been the instigators of the violence (among other things threatening to kill a local shopkeeper), and were tooled up, Violent Disorder charges against them were dropped last November. Meanwhile, the charges against those who had taken action in defence of their community, stuck (surprise, surprise).

The good news is that, finally, in June this year, all the local Bengalis were either acquitted at trial, or had their charges dropped. The bad news is that fascists are still operational in the area. A few days after the acquittals, the Suma Centre, a local community centre run by the Bengali Workers Action Group, was the target of an attempted arson attack.

Obviously work still needs to be done in the area, and AFA activists in Camden are seeking information on local Fascists, and on any initiatives regarding resistance to them in the area. Please contact London AFA.

Finally, even though they should never have been arrested, we'd like to extend our congratulations to the Drummond Street 4 and their families on their acquittal.

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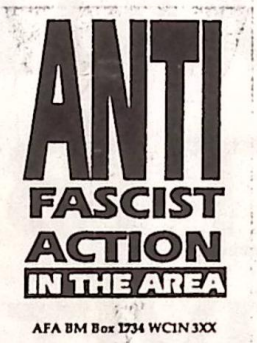

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